

9-1-1967

Then and Now

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Recommended Citation

Petersen, William J. "Then and Now." *The Palimpsest* 48 (1967), 425-432.

Available at: <https://ir.uiowa.edu/palimpsest/vol48/iss9/5>

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Then and Now

Antoine Le Claire once defined the word Iowa as meaning "This is the place". Some sixty thousand Davenport citizens undoubtedly would like to apply that definition to their own home town. For, despite the fact that it is the third largest city in the State, it retains a comfortable hominess that is recognized by the most casual visitor.

That the force of destiny was hovering over the modern Tri-City area is revealed by the story of transportation. As early as 1829 William C. Redfield declared Rock Island to be the natural terminus of the "geographical trunk-line route" between the Atlantic and the Mississippi. In consummation of Redfield's dream, the first railroad to unite the Atlantic with the Mississippi reached Rock Island on February 22, 1854.

In 1842 A. C. Fulton, a Davenport citizen, urged the construction of a railroad from the Atlantic to the Pacific by way of Davenport. As if in answer to this plea Antoine Le Claire broke ground for a railroad in Iowa at Davenport in 1853; the first bridge to span the Mississippi River joined Rock Island with Davenport in 1856; and the driving of the golden spike at Promontory

Point in 1869 brought to fulfillment Fulton's vision of a coast-to-coast railroad through Davenport. Truly, the dreams of the first generation of pioneers were made a reality by the second generation.

The telegraph reached Davenport in 1853 to place the news of the nation within easy reach of her citizens. The laying of the trans-Atlantic cable in 1858 gave Davenport access to the news from Europe within twenty-four hours after it happened. To-day the radio carries the news of the world into Davenport the instant it occurs.

Davenport was blessed with other products of the age of invention. On August 23, 1855, an amazing discovery known as gas was turned on in Davenport: in 1939 almost 16,000 meters measured the consumption of gas in that city. In 1878 the telephone was first used in Davenport: in 1939 there were over 19,000 phones in use. The first electric light company was established at Davenport in 1882: in 1939 the city could count over 19,000 electric meters in Davenport homes and buildings.

Ancient in years but modern in appearance is the Father of Waters. In 1838 Robert E. Lee reported that the Upper Rapids could be eliminated for a small sum of money. In 1939 the huge roller dam and locks, representing an investment of al-

most six million dollars, has eliminated the rapids as a problem in navigation. In 1838 twenty-eight diminutive steamboats plied the upper Mississippi past Davenport. A century later a single Federal Barge Line tow could transport more freight than all the boats docking at Davenport in 1838. On July 19, 20, 1939, 31,756 tons of freight passed through the Davenport locks in forty-eight hours. This tonnage approximated the average yearly freight handled by the Diamond Jo Line steamers during the decade ending in 1910.

The development of the railroad has been equally phenomenal: in 1854 the *Rocket*, the first engine to reach the Mississippi from Chicago, slaked its thirst opposite Davenport; in 1939 the city was served by four railroad lines. It was a far cry in transportation development from the *Rocket* of 1854 to the streamlined *Rockets* of 1939. Streamlined buses and trucks (approximately thirty lines) and streamlined airplanes have speeded up commerce and industry in the "Queen City" of Iowa. Streamlined automobiles (26,292 in Scott County in 1938) put citizens of Davenport within a few driving hours of Chicago, Saint Louis, Kansas City, or Omaha.

In 1839 the streets and "allys" of Davenport had only been surveyed and poorly graded: trees and stumps, mud puddles, deep holes, and ruts,

all served to impede transportation. The changes of a century have been marvelous. On April 1, 1938, the Superintendent of Public Construction in Davenport reported 194.48 miles of paving. During a period of fifty years (since 1889) the city had spent \$9,255,474.53 on its paving and repaving program. The Scott County roads — important arteries in the development of the county seat — presented an equally impressive development. In 1839 the county spent \$166.75 on its roads: by 1939 over ten million dollars had been expended on its 764.56 miles of road.

Davenport has made great strides in education since Marianna Hall's one-room school. In 1935 over 10,000 students were taught by some 300 teachers, principals, and supervisors in the twenty-seven buildings that constituted the Davenport public school system. The value of the land, buildings, and equipment was set at over four million dollars; the annual cost of operation amounted to almost a million dollars. In addition, forty-six teachers taught 1500 students in the parochial schools. Is it any wonder that only six-tenths of one per cent of Davenport's population was classed as illiterate in the census of 1930?

Higher education is also available in Davenport. In 1838 the Davenport Manual Labor College was established by law but apparently never

came into existence. Iowa College, however, opened its doors at Davenport in 1848, though eleven years later it merged with another institution and was moved to Grinnell. In 1882 St. Ambrose College was founded: during 1939 this institution graduated ninety-three students. The Palmer School of Chiropractic has enrolled 14,976 students since it was founded in 1895.

The cultural development of Davenport is reflected in its Public Library, its Public Museum, and its Municipal Art Gallery. On April 6, 1839, the principal citizens of Davenport met at the Davenport Hotel and subscribed \$115 for the purpose of organizing a Library Association. Apparently it never came into being. With the founding of the Young Men's Library Association in 1854 the real history of the Davenport Public Library began. On April 1, 1938, Librarian Edna Giesler reported that 5802 borrowers had access to 123,966 books.

The Davenport Public Museum is an outgrowth of the Davenport Academy of Natural Sciences founded in 1867. Few, if any, cities in the United States under 100,000 population possess such a distinguished institution. It contains rare and valuable scientific works, archeological materials, and pioneer relics, all donated by some two thousand members and friends. The Muni-

cial Art Gallery was opened in 1925 and contains a collection valued at \$500,000.

In 1839 a half dozen churches had been organized in Davenport. A century later more than a score of denominations were represented by almost sixty churches running the gamut of the alphabet from the African Methodist Episcopal to the Unity Church. The firm foundation laid by Mazzuchelli and Pelamourgues is attested by eight Catholic churches. The presence of large numbers of Germans, Swedes, Danes, and Norwegians is reflected in the seven Lutheran churches. The Presbyterians worship in five churches. Besides the more common denominations, there are many others such as the Nazarene, Pentecostal, Apostolic Faith, and Company of Jehovah's Witnesses.

At the time of Davenport's incorporation the various professions were represented by only a few practitioners. In comparison with the ten lawyers in 1838 there are now 107 practicing attorneys. There were only a few doctors to minister to the health of the people in 1838; a century later the city contained eighty-three physicians, thirty-five chiropractors, and eleven osteopaths. No expert in oral surgery was available to ease the toothache of Davenport residents a century ago. Now some fifty dentists are practicing in the

"Queen City" of Iowa. The first settlers, until 1839, had to cross the Mississippi to Stephenson to purchase their drugs; whereas the modern city affords almost fifty drug stores selling an amazing variety of drugs and merchandise.

The Census of 1840 revealed that the United States manufactured products worth \$483,000,000. In 1929 the value of Iowa manufactured products totalled \$898,213,272. Although third among Iowa cities in population, Davenport is fifth in manufacturing, being far surpassed by Cedar Rapids and Waterloo. One factor in this difference, perhaps, is the 1500 Davenport residents who find employment in the United States arsenal on Rock Island.

There were more Davenporters over ten years of age gainfully employed in industry in 1930 than there were people in the Territory of Iowa in 1838. To-day a single concern — the Western Flour Mills — can daily convert 15,000 bushels of wheat into flour. The company's daily capacity of 3000 barrels would probably have been enough to satisfy the needs of the entire upper Mississippi Valley a century ago. The Gordon-Van Tine Company can manufacture enough homes in a single year to have comfortably housed the population of the Territory of Iowa in 1838. In 1840 Davenport's lone newspaper had a capitalization

of \$1000 and employed three men; in 1939 the Davenport *Democrat* and the Davenport *Times* represent a capitalization of \$1,400,000 and employ 300 persons. The combined circulation of the two papers in 1939 is 45,000, or more than enough to supply every inhabitant of the Territory of Iowa in 1840 with a daily paper.

The same amazing comparisons can be made in Scott County agriculture. In 1840 the twenty-one counties comprising the Territory of Iowa produced 1,788,051 bushels of grain. In 1937 Scott County produced 5,101,573 bushels of corn, and ten times as many bushels of oats as the entire Territory of Iowa a century ago. Despite the inroads of tractors and other farm machinery, there were 7176 horses on Scott County farms in 1938 compared with 10,794 horses and mules in the Territory of Iowa a century ago. In cattle Scott County now surpasses the whole Territory in 1840.

Thus, Davenport and the surrounding farms of Scott County far exceed, in population, in wealth, and in cultural attainment, the entire Territory of Iowa a century ago. In their most extravagant optimism the incorporators of the "Town of Davenport" in 1839 could not have imagined such changes.

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN